

JUVENILE SERVICES CENTER

“Juvenile Hall”

ORIGIN

On November 15, 2005, members of the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Grand Jury toured Juvenile Hall as part of their mandate to review prison facilities in the county.

Juvenile Services Center (JSC) located on Highway 1, north of SLO city limits, houses Juvenile Hall, the Juvenile Court, and the offices of Probation staff assigned to work with juvenile offenders. Juvenile Hall is under the direction of the Chief Probation Officer of SLO County.

AUTHORITY

Penal Code 919 (b) states: “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.”

METHOD

The Grand Jury toured the facility, reviewed the JSC procedural handbook, interviewed Juvenile Hall staff, and observed the minors in their academic and recreation environments.

NARRATIVE

Juvenile Hall currently has a maximum of 45 beds; however, frequently the number of minors exceeds this limit, resulting in youth sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Most of the time the Hall is at or above capacity. A new wing will be built sometime between June and November 2006 for intake purposes. Ground-breaking is delayed due to the fact that there is currently no place to house Juvenile Court during the remodeling.

The youthful offenders, many of whom are in custody due in part to drug and alcohol abuse, reside in three units:

- o The East unit houses the younger male offenders, usually ages 13-15, as well as the female teens ages 12-18. The teens who commit less serious crimes are in two-bed cells.

- ø The West unit houses the older teens who commit more serious offenses such as sexual and/or violent crimes, and they are assigned to single-bed cells.
- ø The Center unit is used for housing the remaining older male detainees, usually ages 15-18.

For the 2005 calendar year, the population of Juvenile Hall consisted of 54 percent White, 35 percent Hispanic, five percent African-American, and five percent Other. These percentages generally reflect the population of minors in San Luis Obispo County.

Education:

Resident minors are required to attend classes at the Court School in Juvenile Hall from 8am until 2pm. Many of the students have learning problems, and some are diagnosed with learning disabilities. Individualized Education Plans (IEP) meetings are held at the Court School for the learning disabled. A student works individually according to his or her grade level and abilities with one of two certified teachers. Students receive academic credit for their completed work. The school has appropriate textbooks as well as computers for the students' use. All the standard academic subjects are offered as well as courses in art, journaling and creative writing.

Programs:

The "Heeling Touch" program provides dogs from the County Animal Shelter two days a week. Students learn to care for and obedience-train the animals.

Volunteers work with youth in various activities at the Hall. These include art projects and self esteem building exercises. Some youths work in the kitchen learning culinary skills.

Recreation activities include volleyball, basketball and staff-supervised physical exercises in the outdoor sports yards.

Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous support groups are offered to the youth. A licensed therapist is available for assessments and counseling.

Staff:

During the regular work week, there are 54-55 employees at Juvenile Hall including correctional staff, teachers, nurses, mental health therapists, and probation supervisors.

Intake:

Minors are arrested and taken to Juvenile Hall by police, sheriff deputies or probation officers for a variety of alleged crimes pending a court hearing. A staff member interviews the minor, and background information including family and school history is gathered. The written rules and expectations of Juvenile Hall are explained and provided to the minor. The minor is allowed the opportunity to make two telephone calls. Should a minor disclose abuse by an adult, staff reports the allegations to Child Welfare Services as required by law. Depending upon the alleged offense, some minors are released under house detention to their parent(s) or legal guardian pending a court hearing. Other minors remain in custody until a court hearing is held. The disposition as to where the minor will reside depends upon the recommendation of the probation department with the court's approval. Some minors may return home under probationary supervision, or go to a foster home or group home, also under supervision. There is a six-month program at the Hall for some detainees, which includes parental participation.

Medical Services:

A staff nurse performs a physical examination of all juveniles within one day of their admission to the hall. A pediatrician is on call when needed, and a psychiatrist is on site two days a week to assess the medication needs of the minors with psychiatric and or emotional disorders.

Facility:

San Luis Obispo County's Juvenile Hall, built in 1981, has a capacity of 45 beds, with a total of 30 actual sleeping rooms. Fifteen are single rooms and fifteen are double rooms. Whenever there are more than 30, minors share a room. For 61 days in the first six months of this fiscal year, capacity (45 minors) has exceeded the number of available beds. Juvenile Services Center is in dire need of expansion since the county's population has increased so dramatically.

There are a great many teen gangs and increased crime committed by minors in SLO County. In 2006, there is expected to be an expansion of the Hall to accommodate the intake area (infrastructure for additional beds).

The county has denied annual requests for additional bed space for the past six years. Without an increase in the capacity of Juvenile Hall, minors may need to be transported and housed in Santa Maria's new Juvenile Hall facility at a high financial cost to San Luis Obispo County. These expenses include payments to Santa Maria's Juvenile Hall, staff time and mileage to transport youth to and from San Luis Obispo County for appointments and court appearances. Additionally, the distance creates a problem for the minors' families to visit and participate in their treatment while incarcerated.

These factors constitute a strong argument for the reconsideration of the priorities in the San Luis Obispo County Major Capital Outlay Program to include an accelerated timeline for construction of additional bed space. The operating expenses spent on moving these minors to Santa Maria could be redirected to other Juvenile Services Center programs or elsewhere to other county programs.

CONCLUSION

Juvenile Hall protects the community from youthful offenders by incarcerating them, and is proactive in rehabilitation programs for the minors. The professional staff appears to be comprised of dedicated and caring individuals who encourage the minors to alter their behavior.

FINDING

The population of minors residing at Juvenile Hall often exceeds capacity. There have been repeated requests for funding to increase the capacity of the Hall, and avoid the increased costs to transport and house minors in another county. (Appendix A: Population Graphs)

RECOMMENDATION

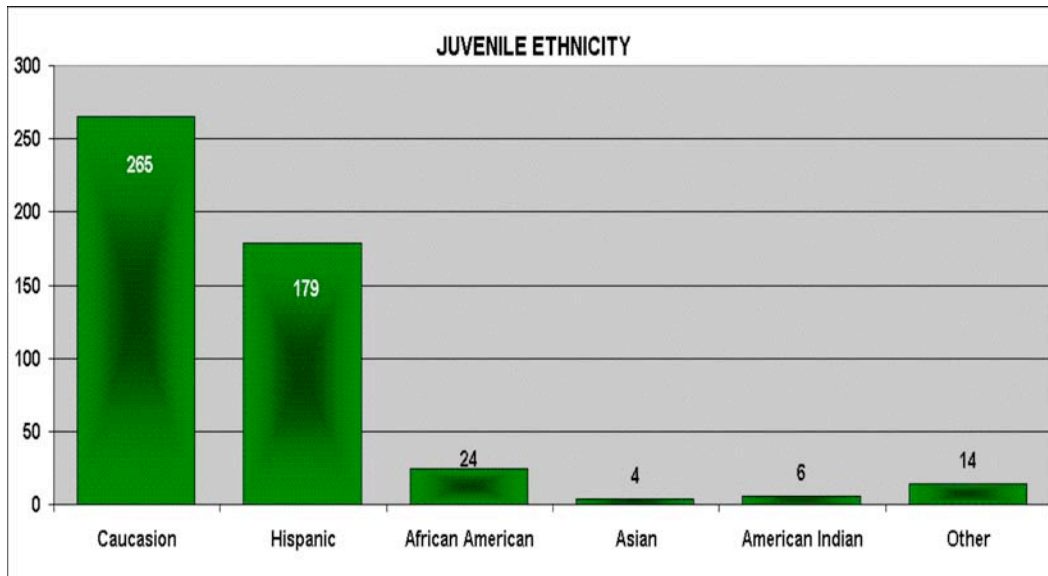
The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors should provide funds to expand the capacity of Juvenile Hall to accommodate the increased number of incarcerated youth.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

- ① **The San Luis Obispo County Probation Department, Due 08/30/06 (Finding and Recommendation)**
- ① **The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, Due 09/30/06 (Finding and Recommendation)**

APPENDIX A

JUVENILE SNAP-SHOT SUMMARY ~ October 1-31, 2005



Juvenile Hall 2005 Daily Average Population

Admissions for the month (average daily)

	2005	AVG TOTAL
January	41	
February	40	
March	38	
April	42	
May	44	
June	46	
July	48	
August	42	
September	43	
October	44	
November	49	
December	48	
	525	43.8

